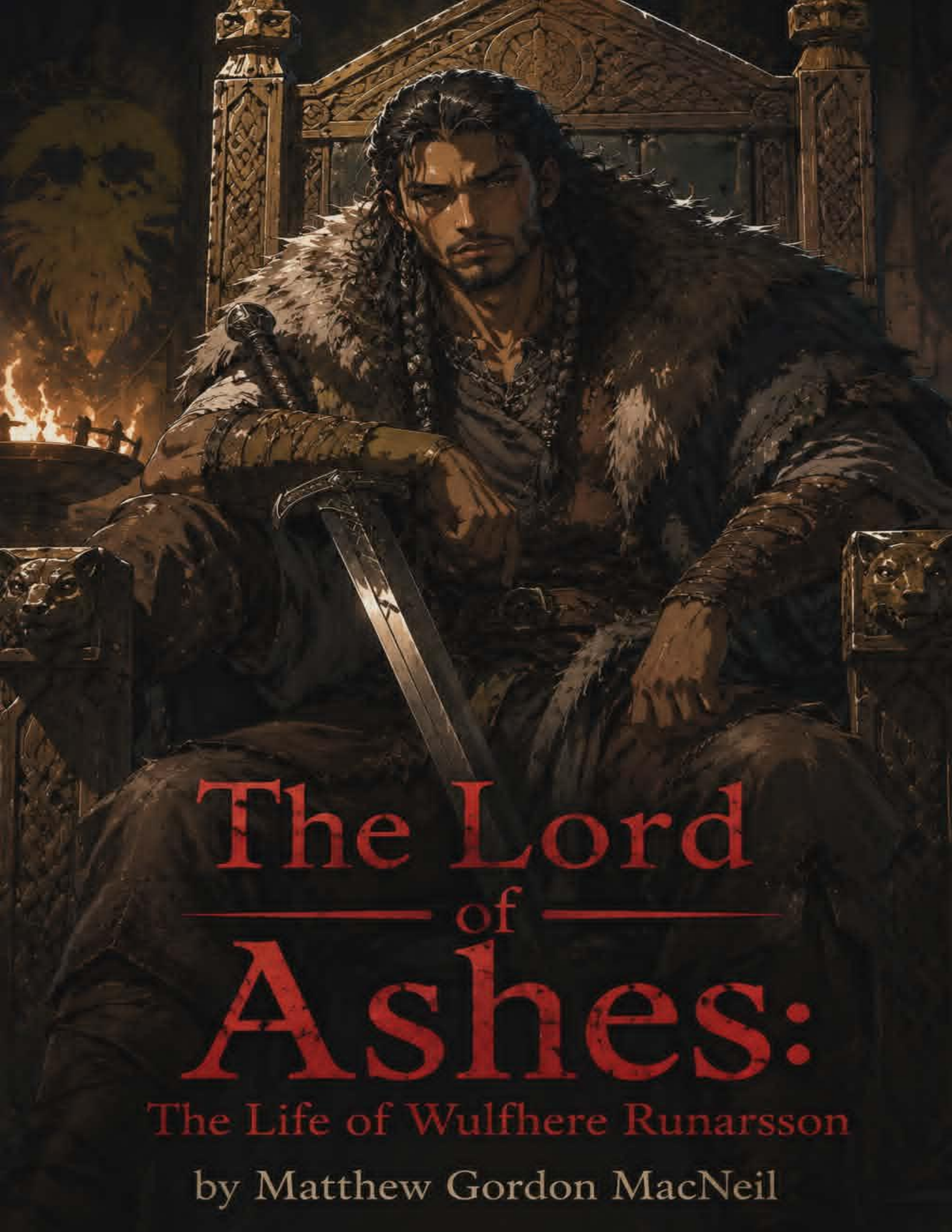

# The Lord of Ashes:

## The Life of Wulfhere Runarsson

by Matthew Gordon MacNeil

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**Notes:**

**Readers should first look into *The Children of the Wolf and Raven: A History of the Early Germanic People* if they have not already as this work deals directly with information laid down there and will not make sense otherwise. You can find it on my Internet Archive profile.**

**At its height the Samothean Empire spread from what is today Britain, France, Egypt, and North America, with links to China and other Eastern regions, being a beacon of culture and prosperity in the ancient world, where many the world over sought a new life and found it.**

**But, as with most great Empires, Samothea's fall was a long, brutal process. Beginning during the reign of King Beligius in 1800 BC Civil War erupted in Northern Samothea, modern day Scotland, and soon spread across the Empire, locking the once leading super power in a near endless bloodbath.**

**For the Germanic people of Almrskogholt and Gudrun the Civil Wars provided both ways of earning a living, many warbands traveling to Samothea to either hire themselves out to the monarch or rebel armies, and worry. The Governor when the Civil Wars started was Hjalmar the Stone Walker, so named from his favorite pair of grey boots, who was a fierce opponent of getting his people involved.**

**He resisted royal summons for as long as he could, while at the same time permitting those who wished to go safe passage. But, in 1785 BC, the Governor could resist no longer**

**and sailed to Samothea to help the King defeat the rebels.**

**He died in the campaign, killed by boiling oil during the siege of Kerneaic, a city in present day Ayrshire. Hjalmar's son, Runar, took up the Governorship after his father's death. Having gone to Europe with the army, he refused to serve any longer after Kerneaic and returned home, much to Beligius' fury. The King wrote several letters of warning to Runar but the new Governor burnt them before reading any.**

**The letters, though Runar did not know it, warned of reprisals should he not return. Beligius promised to stamp out the senior line of Ask and Embla, to raze the villages and homes of Runar's people should he not come back to fight. But when there was no immediate response the Governor assumed there would be none.**

**Shortly after arriving home he married his childhood sweetheart, Watti, a woman of mixed Germanic and Egyptian heritage. Together with her Runar fathered two children, Wulfhere and Eadburga, born in 1783 BC and 1780 BC respectively.**

**Runar's children inherited their mother's golden coloured skin and his fierce blue eyes. Wulfhere's hair, black as night, grew long fast, the boy preferring to wear it in the Germanic fashion as opposed to a close shaved head, popular in his childhood. Eadburga took after her father, her hair a brown colour.**

**Despite the Civil Wars raging across the Empire the children of Runar lived a peaceful life in Almrskogholt with their parents, neither royal army or rebel force attacked them or neighbouring Gudrun, allowing their people to live quietly.**

**Wulfhere's early life saw him largely spend it with his mother, Watti teaching the children traditional Egyptian stories and legends about the Gods and ancient heroes such as Narmer, the first Pharaoh of a united Egypt who all Egyptians, it was said, descended from. But by eight his father took it upon himself to begin his son's martial training.**

**While it may seem archaic today for children to learn how to fight in ancient times, especially in Germanic Culture, it was expected and encouraged. The people valued warriors and the warrior ethos above all things, it was who they were as direct**

**descendants of Odin, God of War and Wisdom. So Wulfhere took up a sword at eight and trained daily, becoming efficient in its use.**

**This routine, predictable, comforting, never lasted beyond his tenth summer. In the winter of 1773 BC a fleet of Samothean ships appeared off the coast of Greenland, signaling to all that Beligius hadn't forgotten of Runar's disobedience all those years ago and now he came for revenge.**

**Runar and a host of warriors rode out to the coast to survey the ships. Five in all, sleek vessels carrying well trained soldiers. Beligius' son Iasius, only seventeen, was on board with his father.**

**Retreating back to the village the Governor marshalled all people of fighting age, men, women, and even the elderly who wished to fight, he couldn't turn down opportunities for men. He ordered Watti to take Wulfhere and Eadburga to Gudrun and remain there until he sent for them. To get them there safely he tasked his Housecarl, Gytha Aelswulfsdottir, with their protection.**

**As the Housecarl led his family away Runar painted his face black and undressed save for his trousers and Thor's Hammer pendant. He wanted to show Beligius he was not afraid, and what better way to do that than to go into battle as his ancestors had done in the past?**

**The Governor called for his Wolf banner to be raised, a sign of the spirit wolf, Hemskar, who saved Ask's life so many winters ago, and marched to the shore to meet the army of the King.**

**Much like his ancestor Samothes so many years before Beligius led his men on to the shore, wading through the freezing water, yelling his orders above the encroaching Germanic war drums. His Generals, his two younger cousins Tirnas and Lugus, fanned out with their warriors as best they could as Runar and his men appeared.**

**The clash was immediate and fierce. Swords and axes slammed into shields or armour. Helmets cracked open and arms severed, within the first few seconds several men fell dead in the grey water, their bodies bobbing like apples.**

**Runar flew about the battlefield like lightning, his speed one of his greatest advantages in a fight. Prior to engagement, while marching, he called silently to his ancestors to guide his sword and his mind, to grant him their abilities. As he neared the beach he thought of Hrolf Sweynsson, the ancestor who fought Samothes' invasion, and asked him to help him lead his men well.**

**A spew of blood drenched his brown beard as the Governor slit a Samothean soldier's throat, and when that man fell he lunged at another, skewering him like a pig, howling with glee, battle lust consuming him. Other Germanic warriors blew war horns, the noise resounding over the beach, sending chills down the Samotheans' spines.**

**For an hour the slaughter went on, Beligius, his son, and Lugus all surviving, but Tirnas died at the half hour mark, an axe opening his belly, spilling his guts out on to the cold sand.**

**Runar, realizing his men couldn't possibly survive much longer, called survivors together and formed a shieldwall formation and led them in a charge against the King, hoping to kill both Beligius and Iasius and end the war there and then.**

**This tactic, while succeeding in wounding Lugus, seeing the General lose an ear to a sword slash, did not achieve Runar's goals. Instead it sealed the fate of his people in a way he never intended.**

**He died, impaled on a spear, and forty men and women along with him, cut down by the Samotheans who, once the battle on the beach was finished, marched inland to conquer the island.**

**It took until evening for word to reach Gudrun that Runar Hjalmarsson and his men were dead and that Beligius had taken Almrskogholt as his own, making a man named Jarsleif the Fair Governor. This Jarsleif was a nobody. Not a warrior or Shaman, not even a council member, but a simple farmer who lived on the outskirts of the main village who happened to bow before Beligius as he approached and swore undying loyalty to him where all others wanted to resist.**

**The Samothean monarch, valuing loyalty above all else, granted Jarsleif the honour of the Governorship, apparently not caring that the man's 'loyalty' came more from not**

**wishing to die than an actual sense of duty, making it hereditary just as it had been under the Dynasty of Hrolf Sweynsson.**

**Knowing Gudrun would soon fall Gytha, remaining true to her oath as Housecarl, spirited the family of Runar away and headed into the Northern regions of Kengir, a place in rebellion against Beligius, where she hoped to raise Wulfhere and Eadburga away from the violence that took their father.**

**The family of Runar found refuge at Horiksholm, a village built on the site where the city of Whitehorse now stands, being taken in by an old friend of their father's, Thorolf Thorolfsson. At first Wulfhere struggled with this new reality, unable to accept his father and home were gone. Watti and Gytha did their best to soothe his heartbreak, but he raged all the same, taking out his frustrations against trees he used for sword practice, slashing and hacking into them until his hands were bloody.**

**As Wulfhere grew up in Horiksholm the war raged on across the Samothean Empire, Beligius unable to calm it. Jarsleif got fat on his newfound wealth, keeping the best crops for**

**himself and giving the people scraps, soon becoming hated. But, as the King's handpicked successor to Runar he was untouchable. Jarsleif married Elide, a daughter of Beligius, further uniting the two Houses.**

**It was also under Jarsleif that many troops from his realm were sent to his father in law in order to bolster Beligius' armies as his own people, growing tired of his failures, were not eager to enlist. Hundreds of Germanic men and women found themselves in the heartland of the Samothean Empire, dying in the fields and valleys of what would one day become England, so far from home.**

**How much of this young Wulfhere knew about is debatable, but no doubt his mother and Gytha kept a close eye on Imperial events, ever watchful for any signs things might spill into the North. While Kengir was at war, the Northern half of the province was spared much of the brutal fighting, eastern Kengir and the West seeing the most of it.**

**Wulfhere spent his time training with sword and axe, trained in the ways of war by Gytha, who switched her loyalty as Housecarl from father to son, believing one day the boy would**

**take back his family's position. While harsh when training Gytha acted like a second mother to Wulfhere and Eadburga.**

**At fifteen, in 1768 BC, Runar's son went on his first raid, following Thorolf into battle along with twenty other boys and men, including Thorolf's son Heidgner. Their target was a small Native Canadian town named Polotec in the south who, according to scout reports, was working with loyalists to the Samothean Crown.**

**Thorolf, who desired independence for Kengir, hoped to crush them in a quick attack. A fourth generation Kengirian, he hoped the province would one day elect a King of its own, and he did all he could to secure independence.**

**Like Thorolf wished, the raid was quick and successful, his men burning crops, houses, and killing up to fifteen men of the tribe, known as the Iwanesa. Wulfhere's contribution to the raid was that he lit a storehouse on fire, and wounded an older Iwanesian warrior, hacking off his right hand.**

**Contrary to what you may expect, Wulfhere's first taste of**

**battle did not horrify him or make him sick as it did to some of his comrades. Instead it gave him a thrill, a rush he never felt before. He soon grew addicted and, with Thorolf's permission, he soon led raids on his own, striking at loyalist towns and villages across the North.**

**By his twentieth year in 1763 BC Wulfhere had torched ten towns, earning him the nickname 'Lord of Ashes' among his friends. In comparison with other raid leaders he was small, but as the years went by and he continued leading successful raids he gathered a following of one hundred men.**

**He used his warband to help Thorolf expand Horiksholm's territory, waging wars against other Chieftains, both Germanic, Native, and Samothean from 1763 to 1752 BC, until Thorolf was, in all but name, King of Northern Kengir, taking the title of Head Chieftain.**

**In this time Wulfhere married Thorolf's daughter Alva, having a son, Thorstein, in 1755 BC, and twin daughters, Alva and Gunnhild, in 1752 BC. With a family of his own now the son of Runar turned his focus on regaining his family's lost land. Jarsleif the Fair was dead, killed by his own son Ragenhere in**

**1756 BC with an axe, and the young man ruled as Governor in the same despotic manner as his predecessor.**

**Thorolf, knowing how indebted he was to Wulfhere, agreed to help him retake his homeland. Gytha, though reaching her elder years now, offered her sword as well. The civil wars, dying down on the North American continent, were still ongoing in Europe worst than ever before, making it almost certain no Samothean retaliation would take place.**

**With his alliances made Wulfhere Runarson launched an invasion of Almrskogholt on June 12th, 1750 BC, leading five hundred warriors on to Greenland's eastern shore. He rode a black stallion he named Sleipinir in honour of Odin's eight legged steed of the same name, acting as his own banner holder. He held the Wolf and Raven Banner high above his head as he rode off the ship, war drums and war horns announcing their arrival.**

**Ragenhere Jarsleifsson sent runners to Gudrun and mustered a force to meet the invaders. An inexperienced war leader Ragenhere relied on the advice of Vagnar Kofisson, a veteran of Hjalmar's campaigns and Runar's fight with Beligius, but**

**this did more harm than good as Vagnar, an alchoholic addicted to mead, offered little save to charge in like mad wolves and kill, kill, kill.**

**The Governor left the elderly man to drink himself into a stupor in the capital village and headed off to meet the son of Runar, but instead had Wulfhere force him back in a bloody retreat in which a hundred of Jarsleifsson's warriors died.**

**It was a spectacular defeat, highlighting how the House of Jarsleif did not earn the right to be leaders but were given the title due to luck and circumstance. Ragenhere, losing his right leg in the final hours of blood filled battle, tried crawling to his Great Hall, a line of red following him.**

**Wulfhere, still on Sleipinir, spotted the Governor. He dashed over, the black stallion's hooves stomping down on the man's body, shattering his remaining leg, back bone, and popping his head open like a fruit, red blood and brain matter splashing onto the soil.**

**When all was said and done Wulfhere Runarsson won back his**

**family's inheritance. He expelled forty nobles who refused to recognize his Lordship, sending them to Samothea, reasoning they loved it more than their own people. After this he called for Alva and their children to join him as well as his mother and Gytha, once they were with him the new Governor held a feast, toasting Odin, Thor, and Tyr, thanking them for granting him the strength to win back his home.**

**Like he and others expected no Samothean attacked came, the monarchy too busy trying to keep itself alive. Wulfhere swore the oath of allegiance his father, grandfather, and ancestors going back to Hrolf Sweynsson swore to the House of Samothes, but it was nominal and in all but name he ruled over Almrskogholt as a King.**

**In 1747 BC he went to the aid of Thorolf Thorolfsson when his realm was invaded by Lugalanazi, a rebel leader of Sumerian descent in the western half of Kengir, who thought of himself as a King, taking on the traditional Sumerian title Lugal for it. Throughout the year, even during the harshest months of winter, Lugalanazi tried breaking Thorolfsson's power in the North.**

**The biggest battle, fought on December 26th, took place along the Mackenzie river, the longest river in Canada. Wulfhere, at the head of two hundred Germanic warriors pulled from Almrskogholt and Gudrun, fought with Thorolf against the Sumerian man whose own force consisted of Sumerian, Egyptian, and Native warriors, numbering a thousand in all.**

**Thorolf and his son Heidgner, their shield wall position overwhelmed early in the battle, fell into the freezing cold river, breaking through the ice, and swept away by the current. Having no choice Wulfhere assumed the position of Commander over the entire Northern army, also at about a thousand men and women, leading them against the Western forces in a fit of blind rage.**

**His rage was so great the Governor almost lost his life. A Native man named White Hair, due to his hair going prematurely white as a young age, took advantage of his 'blindness' to sneak up behind him and deliver a stab wound to his lower back.**

**Wulfhere stiffened immediately, falling on his face, making White Hair believe he killed the man. But luckily for**

**Runarsson, and the Northern army, this wasn't the case. By sheer determination Wulfhere rose again, ignoring the searing pain, and continued to fight, his sword taking the lives of ten people. His side won the day and Lugalanazi, surviving this carnage, fled back into the plains where he remained, dying at the hands of his nobles less than two years after this battle, which came to be known among the Germanic people as the Battle of Thorolf's End to honour the Chieftain.**

**The Northern Chieftains, now leaderless, appealed to Wulfhere when he returned to Horiksholm to become their Head Chieftain. He deliberated with Gytha, who, despite her elderly age, still acted advisor and Housecarl. She suggested he take the position, at least until a suitable replacement could be found.**

**With this in mind Wulfhere accepted the offer, uniting Northern Kengir with Almrskogholt and Gudrun into one single realm. Following Gytha's advice Wulfhere would eventually select a Head Chief on his own, but this was near the end of his life in 1701 BC, up until then ruling the realm without any sign of ever splitting it up. The man he chose, Ragnar Hrolfsson, was a nephew of Thorolf, son of his younger brother, Kalmar.**

**Wulfhere Runarsson reigned over his people until his death at the age of eighty three in 1700 BC. The Battle of Thorolf's End was his final military confrontation, the Governor focusing on peace with his Kengirian neighbours. He fortified Almrskogholt and Gudrun, building several fortresses along the coasts to guard against invasion. He established what we would term food banks today for the poor, and in his final ten years he opened up trade with India again, something Jarsleif, for whatever reason, shut down.**

**As Civil War continued to wage around them, the Germanic people under Wulfhere Runarsson enjoyed a period of peace and prosperity. His line would lead to the House of Odin as Norr Thorrisson was his direct descendant through his son Thorstein.**